

Glanders

What is glanders?

Glanders is a disease caused by bacteria called *Burkholderia mallei*. The disease affects mainly horses, donkeys and mules. However, glanders may spread from infected animals to humans.

Who gets glanders?

Glanders is a rare disease in the U.S., but it still occurs in other parts of the world such as Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Central and South America. People who get glanders usually have worked with animals that have the disease. Only one case has been reported in the U.S. since the 1940s. In that case, the ill person had worked with the bacteria in a research laboratory.

How is glanders spread?

Person-to-person spread of glanders is extremely rare. People who get the disease usually have had close contact with an infected animal. The bacteria usually enter the body through breaks in the skin or through the eyes, nose or mouth.

Could glanders be used for bioterrorism?

Yes. The glanders bacteria are considered possible bioterrorism agents because they can be made into aerosols that are easy to spread and, if breathed in, could cause severe disease.

What are the symptoms of glanders?

The bacteria can infect the skin or lungs or can spread throughout the body. Symptoms of skin infection include rashes, bumps under the skin, or open, draining wounds. Symptoms of lung infection include cough, fever, shortness of breath or lung abscesses. When glanders spreads throughout the body through the blood, symptoms include fever, chills, muscle aches, chest pain, skin rash, diarrhea or enlargement of the liver and/or spleen. Some people have symptoms that come and go over a long period of time.

How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?

Symptoms usually appear within 1 to 14 days after exposure.

How is glanders diagnosed and treated?

Glanders is diagnosed through special laboratory tests. Depending on the type of glanders, samples may be taken from different parts of the body.

Glanders is treated with antibiotics. Healthcare providers choose the antibiotic based on the patient's symptoms and the results of laboratory tests.

Is there a vaccine for glanders?

There is currently no vaccine for glanders.

Where can I get more information about glanders?

More information about glanders is available on the Virginia Department of Health website at www.vdh.virginia.gov or through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov.